

Governor Riley Orders I-65 Lane Reversal on Saturday

MONTGOMERY - Governor Bob Riley today ordered the Alabama Departments of Transportation and Public Safety to implement a daytime lane reversal on Interstate 65 on Saturday, July 9. Governor Riley made the decision based on the high volume of northbound traffic on I-65 as people evacuate the coastal areas.

"Our departments are trained and fully capable of handling the I-65 lane reversal in order to safely and efficiently evacuate people from Alabama's coastal areas," Governor Riley said. "I continue to encourage people to leave the area and get out of harm's way."

The decision to reverse lane I-65 during daylight hours only is based on the safety concerns for both motorists and state employees. Transportation and law enforcement personnel will close I-65 to southbound traffic around 6:00 a.m. Saturday at the Fairview Avenue exit in Montgomery, and will begin clearing southbound traffic at exits toward the traffic crossover point in Baldwin County. The initial traffic crossover point for northbound traffic to enter the southbound lanes is located at I-65 just south of State Road 225 in Baldwin County.

At 8:00 a.m. or as soon as personnel determine there is no remaining traffic in the southbound lanes, the southbound lanes will be opened to northbound traffic. Transportation and law enforcement personnel will be at every exit from the initial crossover to Montgomery and variable message boards and detour signs will be deployed to provide additional information. Once in Montgomery, measures are in place to return traffic to the proper lanes.

The crossover point in Baldwin County will be closed at 5 p.m. to re-establish normal traffic flow and to move DOT and DPS personnel out of the path of approaching heavy winds and rain. There will not be any lane reversal after Saturday.

Transportation Director Joe McInnes urges motorists to drive with caution and patience as hundreds of transportation and public safety officials take extraordinary measures to help evacuate the Gulf Coast.

Despite having four northbound lanes, motorists should expect traffic to move slower than normal on I-65. Motorists should expect congestion along feeder and detour routes because of I-65 southbound traffic, and should allow extra time to reach destinations. Also, I-65 southbound will be closed to traffic at the I-85 interchange. Rest areas will remain open as long as weather permits.

The plan for reversing I-65 traffic consists of 110 steps and requires 200 Department of Transportation employees, 60 to 80 state troopers and additional personnel from state and local emergency management and local law enforcement agencies. Transportation and

law enforcement personnel will be positioned at 30 checkpoints and exits along the four lanes of I-65.

The Department of Transportation has established a toll-free information line that will provide around-the-clock information on Saturday's lane reversal and road closures. The toll-free number is 1-888-588-2848, or (334) 353-6650 from the Montgomery area. Road closure information is also available at www.dot.state.al.us.

For more information, contact the Governor's Press Office at (334) 242-7150.